

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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SUBJECT: LIGURIA'S LOCAL ELECTIONS OF MAY 14-15

REF: GENOA 0268

SUMMARY: EVEN BEFORE MORO'SKIDNAPPING AND EVENTUAL ASSASSINATION, MOST OBSERVERS WERE PREDICTING THAT THE SMALL ELECTORAL TESTS IN LIGURIA WHICH, INVOLVES LESS THAN 4 PERCENT OF THE REGION'S ELIGIBLE ELECTORATE, WOULD SEE THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND TO A LESSER EXTENT, THE COMMUNISTS SECURE MODEST GAINS AT THE EXPENSE OF THE SMALLER PARTIES. SUCH A RESULT WOULD HAVE THUS CONFIRMED THE 1976 NATIONAL ELECTION TREND WHICH SAW A SHARP POLARIZATION OF THE VOTE TOWARD THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES IN A WAY FROM THE SMALLER POLITICAL FORCES. MANY NOW BELIEVE THAT MORO'S MURDER BY THE RED BRIGADES MAY ALSO RESULT IN A LARGE SYMPATHY VOTE FOR THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND AN EQUALLY LARGE ANTIPATHY VOTE AGAINST ALL THE "RED" PARTIES, COMMUNISTS AND SOCIALISTS INCLUDED. MUCH OF THIS MAY WELL BE BASED ON WISHFUL THINKING OR FEAR. NEVERTHELESS, LOCAL COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA IS TRYING TO DOWNPLAY THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE TESTS, THUS PERHAPS PREPARING THE

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FAITHFUL FOR ANY SURPRISE. END SUMMARY.

1. TWENTY MUNICIPALITIES COMPRISING AN ELECTORATE OF SOME 50,000, OR LESS THAN 4 PERCENT OF THE REGION'S TOTAL VOTE, WILL CAST BALLOTS IN LIGURIA ON MAY 14-15. ONLY 5 OF THE MUNICIPALITIES (WITH A TOTAL VOTE OF 40,000) HAVE POPULATION OF ABOVE 5,000 AND WILL, THEREFORE, VOTE UNDER

THE PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM. THESE ARE CAMOGLI AND COGOLETO IN THE PROVINCE OF GENOA, LERICI IN THE PROVINCE OF LA SPEZIA, LOANO IN THE PROVINCE OF SAVONA AND TAGGIA IN THE PROVINCE OF IMPERIA. ALL FIVE MUNICIPAL COUNCILS WERE ELECTED IN 1972, WHEN THE THREE MAJOR PARTIES RECEIVED THE FOLLOWING PERCENTAGE OF THE VOTE (IN PARENTHESES THEIR PERCENTAGE OF THE VOTE IN THE 1976 NATIONAL ELECTIONS):

CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS	33.4 PERCENT (37.7 PERCENT)
COMMUNISTS	28.8 PERCENT (35.7 PERCENT)
SOCIALISTS	14.3 PERCENT (10.6 PERCENT)

TWO OF THE MUNICIPALITIES, LERICI AND COGOLETO, ARE PRESENTLY RULED BY COMMUNIST/SOCIALIST ADMINISTRATIONS (GIUNTE). THE OTHER THREE ARE GOVERNED BY CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC-LED GIUNTE. MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT THE OUTGOING GIUNTE WILL BE RECONFIRMED WITHOUT CHANGE.

2. THE REMAINING 15 MUNICIPALITIES (12 OF THEM IN THE PROVINCE OF IMPERIA, THE ONLY ONE OF THE FOUR LIGURIAN PROVINCES UNDER CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT RULE) WILL VOTE WITH A MAJORITY SYSTEM WHICH ENCOURAGES THE JOINING OF POLITICAL FORCES IN BLOCKED LISTS AND THUS THE RESULTS ARE SELDOM ACCURATE YARDSTICKS OF THE RELATIVE STRENGTH OF THE INDIVIDUAL PARTIES.

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COMMENT: ITALIAN VOTERS GENERALLY VOTE WITH THEIR IDEOLOGICAL HEARTS IN LOCAL CONTESTS AND WITH THEIR POCKETBOOKS IN NATIONAL ELECTIONS. THUS, THE SMALL PARTIES ALMOST INVARIABLY SCORE BETTER IN THE LOCAL THAN IN THE NATIONAL TESTS. THE REVERSE IS TRUE OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND THE COMMUNISTS. THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE SMALL ELECTORAL TESTS, THEREFORE, WILL BE FOUND IN THE DEGREE OF CHANGE IN PAST ELECTORAL NORMS. THUS, FOR EXAMPLE, IF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WON ONE OR TWO PERCENTAGE POINTS LESS THAN THE 37.7 PERCENT THEY SCORED IN 1976, THE RESULT WOULD BE FOLLOWING THE NORM. IF THEY HELD ON TO THE 1976 SCORE, IT WOULD INDICATE A TREND TOWARD A SIZEABLE INCREASE. IF, FINALLY, THEY SCORED WELL ABOVE 1976, CURRENT EXPECTATIONS OF A LARGE SYMPATHY VOTE, CAUSED BY MORO'S MURDER, WOULD HAVE BEEN PROVEN CORRECT. TO A LESSER, BUT SIMILAR DEGREE, THE SAME WOULD HOLD TRUE FOR THE COMMUNISTS. THUS, IF THE COMMUNISTS WERE TO DROP MORE THAN ONE OR TWO PERCENTAGE POINTS BELOW THEIR 1976 SCORE OF 35.7 PERCENT CURRENT PREDICTIONS OF COMMUNISTS LOSSES BASED ON THE "ANTIPATHY" VOTE FOR THE "REDS" GENERATED BY THE RED BRIGADES' MURDER OF MORO, WOULD HAVE COME TRUE. WE SHALL ALL KNOW MONDAY NIGHT, MAY 15.DISCIULLO

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